California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Central Coast Region

Linda S. Adams
Secretary for Environmental Protection

Internet Address: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, California 93401-7906
Phone (805) 549-3147 • FAX (805) 543-0397

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

June 4, 2009

Attn: Paul Dabbs
Strategic Water Planning
Statewide Integrated Water Management
California Department of Water Resources
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

CENTRAL COAST WATER BOARD COMMENTS ON PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER PLAN UPDATE 2009: INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT (DRAFT UPDATE)

Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Central Coast Water Board) staff reviewed the Draft California Water Plan Update and associated California Water Plan Highlights brochure. We appreciate the opportunity to comment, and we provide specific recommendations for revising your Draft Update. ***California's water resources are at a tipping point; If we do not take substantial action now to protect our water resources, the cost and impact to society will be catastrophic, and these resources will not exist for future generations.***

The Draft Update includes decades of significant and noteworthy work by Department of Water Resources staff endeavoring to tie together numerous and often conflicting regulations, policies, special interests and hydrologic concepts within a single living document. We are pleased to see the inclusion of more proactive resource management strategies within the Draft Update such as watershed management, land-use planning and management, and recharge area protection. We are also pleased to see language within the Draft Update regarding sustainability and addressing watersheds as ecosystems. However, the Draft Update lacks focus and only begins to uncover the real solution to managing our water resources in a proactive, measurable, and sustainable way.

We are currently at a critical crossroads in managing California's water supplies: We must become performance based organizations that are accountable for achieving meaningful, tangible goals that define healthy functioning watersheds. The health of California's watersheds and water supplies, and the people who rely on them, are dependent on us. We must gauge our success with key performance measures, and be held accountable, and hold ourselves accountable, for achieving our goals and protecting healthy watersheds.

This approach is essential for the sustainable management of our water resources in a manner that will provide clean and abundant water supplies, and a sustainable California economy, for current and future generations.

Watershed Protection and Restoration

The Draft Update and Highlights brochure both call for a fundamental change in the way water resources are managed in California based on the recognition that the historical water supply based approach is not sustainable. We agree that a fundamental change is critically needed. Adjusting our bureaucratic approaches will not work; relying on stakeholder processes that simply avoid tough decisions associated with meaningful changes in behavior will not work; compromises that allow continuing degradation will not work. We must require a fundamental shift in behavior, similar to the decision to adopt the Clean Water Act in 1972. The Clean Water Act was adopted because of the pollution crisis we were in at that time, where industries and municipalities were causing the collapse of whole ecosystems and the services they provided. We are in that situation again today, and the magnitude and acceleration of degradation is greater than it was in 1972. We have to take meaningful action now.

The following statement is taken from the blue "Sustainability" box on page 11 of the Highlights brochure:

> "To achieve sustainability, resource managers and planners must transition from the past model that places value primarily on water supply yield to a model that values the sustainability of the system."

Although the Draft Update acknowledges the need for a dramatic shift in the way we manage California's water resources and discusses various management strategies to address this point, the Draft Update does not outline a clear and focused plan with measurable goals and performance-based measures that will result in tangible result towards sustainability.

Without measurable goals that define a clear outcome, a schedule to achieve the goals, and key performance measures to show progress, there is no accountability, and without accountability, there will be no meaningful action.

The framework by which we have traditionally managed our watersheds is flawed as evidenced by the numerous examples contained within the Draft Update. The examples illustrate how many of our watershed ecosystems are failing on multiple levels (i.e., diminishing water quality and quantity, inadequate flood control, threatened or endangered species, etc.). Although the Draft Update emphasizes ongoing drought conditions in California and the looming effects of climate change, it alludes to the fact that existing water resource management practices are not sustainable regardless of these growing stressors. More often than not, our historical management strategies have resulted in the degradation and even the loss of basic chemical, physical and

biological watershed functions that are not only essential to the sustainable management of our water resources as a source of supply, but more importantly the viability of the complex watershed ecosystems as a whole, our economy, and our society.

Our traditional management strategy is failing because it is primarily predicated on the control and manipulation of water resources from a water supply perspective that is driven by land use activities (i.e., urban development, irrigated agriculture, flood control, etc.) with "potential" environmental impacts typically being a second tier consideration. Water supply has generally taken precedent over protecting the essential functions of healthy watershed ecosystems based on the historical anti-degradation (State Water Board Resolution 68-16) paradigm of whether a given project results in "the maximum benefit to the people of California." This paradigm is too often based on a short-term, financial perspective, with little or no regard for the longer-term societal economic, health, and ecological costs. That is, degradation of our water resources and watersheds has been historically acceptable as long as there is some perceived economic benefit. This has been a short-sighted economic perspective that is often based on the economic gains of a few at the potential expense of higher future costs for all Californians. We now know there is significant long-term economic liability associated with the degradation of our watersheds.

Whether we are conscious of it or not we are all bearing the costs (as consumers and taxpayers) related to our failing watersheds. These extraordinary costs are associated with increasing water treatment and pumping requirements (e.g., nitrate treatment), development of alternative water supplies (e.g., desalination) and conjunctive use projects, flood control management, emergency response and flood damage repair (also resulting in higher flood insurance rates), restoration and remediation projects, increasing healthcare costs associated with contaminant exposure, and decreasing tourist revenues. These costs will only increase if we do not change how we manage our watersheds.

The Draft Update does not identify a singular strategy or clearly stated set of measurable goals that tie together and protect all beneficial uses. Instead, it identifies and discusses multiple conflicting goals and management strategies to protect the myriad of beneficial uses. Many of the seven goals listed within Chapter 2, Imperative to Act, of Volume 1 of the Draft Update are either too complex to evaluate whether they are being achieved or read more like policy statements.

For a goal to be real, it must be clear, measurable, and time based.

The Chapter 1 Introduction within the Resources Management Strategies section (Volume 2) of the Draft Update states, "A key objective of the California Water Plan Update 2009 is to present a diverse set of resource management strategies to meet the water-related resource management needs of each region and statewide." The diverse and numerous resource management strategies, without clearly defined measurable

goals, result in the Draft Update lacking clarity and focus, as well as a lack of ability to measure progress toward any specific goal, which means a lack of personal accountability, which means a lack of real action. In addition, this diverse management approach will result in the more holistic "resource stewardship" management strategies (Watershed Management and Ecosystem Restoration) being watered down, or completely lost in the shuffle, among the various other water supply related management strategies. Of the 27 management strategies outlined within Volume 2 of the Draft Update, the Ecosystem Restoration and Watershed Management strategies are relegated to chapters 22 and 27, respectively. Although the Draft Update touts a new chapter in the way California needs to manage water resources based on models of integrated water management and sustainability, the Draft Update still appears primarily focused on the management of California's water resources from a water supply and flood management perspective. The proposed framework of numerous diverse and often conflicting goals and management strategies will likely result in the ongoing degradation of our watershed ecosystems and continued failure to provide sustainable water supplies.

One simple overriding strategy or goal is needed to provide sustainable water supplies. The strategy that will do this is based on the protection and restoration of healthy watershed functions. The premise is that managing a watershed from a water supply beneficial use perspective only protects that beneficial use at the potential expense of essential watershed functions, and when essential watershed functions fail, this will undermine the water supply beneficial use (and potentially all other beneficial uses). Whereas, by managing the watershed as an ecosystem based on the chemical, physical, and biological parameters of healthy functioning watersheds, the water supply and all other beneficial uses will be protected. A commonly overlooked reality is that abundant and clean water does not exist in watersheds that do not function properly. Subsequently, sustainable water supplies for future generations can only be achieved within healthy functioning watersheds. Until we set the chemical, physical, and biological watershed functions as the priority benchmarks by which we evaluate the success of our management strategies, we will continue to fail in managing our water resources (both quantity and quality) in a sustainable manner that will provide clean and abundant water supplies for future generations.

Therefore, the goal for achieving sustainable water supplies to meet existing and future water demand should be met first and foremost through protecting and restoring healthy watershed functions.

The development and implementation of new water sources, conjunctive use strategies, conservation and reuse are currently required to meet existing demand and flood control projects are required for public safety and to protect property. If these infrastructure projects are implemented without the protection and restoration of essential watershed functions as one of the primary measures of success, they will fall short of the intended target and ultimately result in the increased and accelerating degradation of our watersheds, unsustainable water supplies and additional economic

liability for all Californians. As noted in the Overview of Chapter 22, Ecosystem Restoration, "Future water and flood management projects that fail to protect and restore their ecosystems will face reduced effectiveness, sustainability, and public support." Specific examples of the benefits of ecosystem restoration are also outlined within Chapter 22 of the Draft Update. The groundwork is there, but the Draft Update lacks clear focus on the one specific objective – healthy functioning watersheds - that will result in the protection of all beneficial uses and sustainable management of our water resources.

This is not a new or groundbreaking concept in water resources management. A large number of countries, states, and local agencies have adopted policies based on a holistic approach to sustainable water resource or watershed management that embrace watersheds as ecosystems and sets the physical, chemical and biological functions of watersheds as the metrics of success. The Central Coast Water Board is actively embracing this approach[1], the 2008-2012 State Water Board Strategic Plan Update employs this approach as the framework for becoming a performance-based organization, and the U.S. EPA recently unveiled the Healthy Watersheds Initiative[2]. The following is an excerpt from the U.S. EPA Healthy Watershed Initiative website:

> The objective of the federal Clean Water Act is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters." While other EPA programs focus on restoring impaired waters, the Healthy Watersheds Initiative augments the watershed approach with proactive, holistic aquatic ecosystem conservation and protection. The Healthy Watersheds Initiative includes both assessment and management approaches that encourage states, local governments, watershed organizations, and others to take a strategic, systems approach to conserve healthy components of watersheds, and, therefore, avoid additional water quality impairments in the future.

The following is an excerpt from the State Water Board 2008-2012 Strategic Plan Update:

> Healthy watersheds, or drainage basins, that provide clean and plentiful surface water and groundwater, and support healthy riparian and wetland habitat, are essential to support the State's resources and economic future. A watershed approach is hydrologically-focused, recognizes the degree to which groundwater and surface water bodies are connected physically, recognizes the linkages between water quantity and water quality, and requires a comprehensive, long-term approach to water resources management that takes system interactions into account.

[1] http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/publications_forms/publications/vision/index.shtml
[2] http://www.epa.gov/healthywatersheds/

To break from the existing and failing water management paradigm and to develop a sustainable approach to our water quantity and quality challenges, we first need to redefine how we and all other stakeholders perceive water management in California.

We can begin to do this by simply changing our terminology from "water management" or "resource management" to "watershed protection and restoration." By doing so, we will redefine our role and objective in a very fundamental way.

Second, we need to establish a simple set of clear and concise measurable goals toward that objective based on clear and concise vision and mission statements (as opposed to a typical approach based on a large number of complex and conflicting goals and management strategies that are difficult to measure).

Third, we need to evaluate and implement actions or tasks that will achieve the measurable goals and to continuously monitor our effectiveness in achieving tangible results and adjust our actions accordingly. We must be held accountable, as agencies and as individuals, for achieving the goals.

The Draft Update already discusses and lays the groundwork for this adaptive management approach, but is lacking clear and concise goals by which we can measure our performance and be accountable as the agencies responsible for protecting California's watersheds.

We realize that redefining and modifying the Draft Update based on the healthy functioning watershed performance-based approach may appear daunting, especially this late in the review process. However, the continuing degradation of our watersheds and resources is more daunting. It is imperative that we take the time now to develop a clearly defined performance-based approach to watershed management built around the principles of healthy functioning watersheds that will hold us accountable for achieving tangible results. California simply cannot wait another five years. Consequently, we are committed to supporting you in this effort. We do not think this effort is as daunting as it may appear upon first glance given the Draft Update already contains the necessary structure (Vision & Mission, Goals, Guiding Principles, Objectives and Actions) and references to sustainability based on the regional management of watersheds as ecosystems.

Given the scope of our comments above, the following is not a definitive list of our recommended changes, but is intended to provide specific examples of how the Draft Update can be modified to embody the healthy functioning watershed, performance-based approach. Specific comments regarding the content of the Draft Update are also provided as noted below.

<u>Examples of Recommended Changes – Healthy Functioning Watersheds approach</u>

1. Change the title of the Water Plan from "California Water Plan Update; Integrated Water Management" to "California Water Plan Update 2009: Integrated Watershed Protection and Restoration."

2. Reframe the Vision and Mission statements within the Draft Update around the objective of protecting and restoring healthy watershed functions. The following are provided as examples using the Vision and Mission statements contained within Box 2-1 on page 2-20 of Volume 1, Chapter 2 Imperative to Act:

   Vision

   California's watersheds are healthy and functioning based on essential chemical, physical, and biological parameters such that:

   - They provide sustainable clean and abundant water supplies;
   - Enhance public health, safety, and quality of life for all communities;
   - They support sustainable business practices; and
   - Foster and support biological diversity, ecological values, and cultural heritage.

   Mission

   The Development of a Water Plan to protect and restore California's watersheds by:

   - Providing state, federal, tribal, regional, and local governments and organizations with an ongoing collaborative strategic planning forum and guidance document:
   - Establishing measurable-goals, objectives, and near-term and long-term actions to achieve sustainable water supplies and foster public health and safety based on parameters of healthy watershed functions; and
   - Evaluating current and future watershed conditions, challenges and opportunities.
   - Hold agencies and individuals accountable for measuring and achieving tangible goals.

   The stated vision, mission and goals should be presented within the first section of the Draft Update (even before the introduction) such that they lay the foundation for the context of all subsequent information contained within the document. These items are currently buried within a "Box" toward the end of Chapter 2 where they are difficult to find and lack relevance in defining clear and concise objectives.

3. Develop clear and concise measurable goals. The following goals are provided as potential examples:

By 2015 the Sacramento River Delta will:

- Show improving trends in healthy watershed functions (requires Update to define healthy watershed functions and assessment tools)
- Not be susceptible to critical levee failure (define key measures)
- Provide adequate flood protection (define key measures)

From the Recycled Water Policy:

- Increase the use of recycled water, relative to 2002 levels, by at least one million acre-feet per year (afy) by 2020 and by at least two million afy by 2030.
- Increase the use of storm water over use, relative to 2007, by at least 500,000 afy by 2020 and by at least one million afy by 2030.
- Increase the amount of water conserved in urban and industrial uses, relative to 2007, by at least 20 percent by 2020.

- By 2014, regional (by groundwater basin/sub-basin) salt and nutrient management plans will be completed for Regional Water Board review pursuant to the Recycled Water Policy, and by 2015, Regional Water Boards will consider for adoption revised implementation plans based on the salt and nutrient management plans.

Measurable Goals from the Central Coast Water Board; Healthy Functioning Watersheds – A Vision for the Future:

- By 2025, 80 percent of Aquatic Habitat is healthy, and the remaining 20 percent exhibits positive trends in key parameters.
- By 2025, 80 percent of lands within a watershed are managed to maintain proper watershed functions, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key watershed parameters.
- By 2025, 80 percent of groundwater is clean, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key parameters.
- By 2013, critical groundwater recharge areas within California are defined, and state guidelines are adopted to protect and restore them, and by 2016, local ordinances and land use policies are in place to protect and restore them.
- By 2014, a statewide watershed (surface water and groundwater) monitoring program and GIS system are in place to track and evaluate water quality, water quantity and land use data and flood control projects.

4. Identify, develop and implement assessment tools to evaluate whether the stated measurable-goals are being achieved. Provide progress reports (report cards) in subsequent Water Plan Updates or more regular reporting between updates to track progress in achieving the stated measurable-goals.

5. Change language throughout the document to focus on the protection and restoration of healthy watershed functions as the primary objective to protect beneficial uses and provide sustainable water supplies. For example:

   From Chapter 2 – Imperative to Act, the first bullet point under "Fundamental Lessons" states:

   > Sustainable development and water use, and environmental stewardship foster a strong economy, protect public health and the environment, and enhance our quality of life. Managing for sustainability relies on the full consideration of social, economic, and environmental values in policy- and decision-making. Sustainable water use ensures that we develop and manage our water and related resources in a way that meets present needs while protecting and enhancing our environment and assures our ability to meet the needs of the future.

   The above paragraph is fundamentally flawed because it juxtaposes two outcomes equally: We cannot meet all perceived present and future needs and protect and enhance our environment. This is the typical political approach of promising everything to all interests. The true result is not achieving either outcome. We have to choose our values and priorities, and make tough decisions.

   We recommend changing this statement as follows:

   > Sustainable development and water use are dependent upon the protection and restoration of healthy watershed functions and will foster a strong economy, protect public health and the environment, and enhance our quality of life. Managing for sustainability relies on the full consideration of the chemical, physical and biological parameters of healthy functioning watersheds in policy- and decision-making to be protective of all social, economic, and environmental values. Healthy functioning watersheds are critical to the health and welfare of current and future generations, and are therefore our top priority; this condition must be met first, and then we will provide for sustainable resource use.

6. Link specific management practices or objectives to the primary goal of protecting the chemical, physical and biological functions of healthy watersheds within the Update, like this:

   > Sustainable water supplies will be achieved by protecting and restoring healthy watershed functions via establishing and maintaining riparian habitat buffers, protecting groundwater recharge areas, minimizing and treating storm water runoff, maximizing groundwater recharge, maximizing water conservation and reuse, minimizing contaminant loading to surface water and groundwater, and the development and implementation of water balances for every watershed, groundwater basin and sub-basin to ensure adequate base flows within surface waters and to prevent groundwater overdraft.

Other Specific Comments Regarding Content (Volume 3, Chapter 4 – Central Coast Hydrologic Region):

1. Typo on page 4-1, first paragraph, second sentence: "The Pajaro, Big Basin, and River hydrologic units...." Should read, "The Big Basin and Pajaro River hydrologic units…."

2. Seawater Intrusion is dangling at the end of the document on page 4-20. It should be tied to current conditions of groundwater overdraft in nearly all large coastal basins/drainages, and tied to future challenges related to groundwater overdraft protection. In addition, there is no specific mention of the adjudicated Seaside Groundwater Basin and related seawater intrusion as a result of overdraft conditions or the two programs currently being implemented by the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) to combat this problem; the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project and Nacimiento and San Antonio Dam/Reservoir projects. We suggest you coordinate directly with the MCWRA to refine the discussion of this topic.

3. Note: In 2006, the Pajaro River was designated as America's most endangered river by the American Rivers organization (http://www.amrivers.org/).

4. Add the following to the Challenges section on page 4-16:

   Carmel River (Carmel Valley Aquifer) Overdraft – The State Water Resources Control Board issued Order No. WR 95-10 to California American Water Company (Cal-Am) on July 6, 1995 regarding the illegal diversion of about 10,730 acre-feet per year of water from the Carmel River. The diversion results in the degradation of aquatic habitat within the Carmel River and Carmel River Lagoon. Cal-Am and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District are currently implementing programs to mitigate the illegal diversion and develop alternative water supplies and conjunctive use strategies (i.e., Seaside Groundwater Basin Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project).

   Salt and Nutrient Management Plans – The State Board Recycled Water Policy calls for the development and implementation of salt and nutrient management plans for each groundwater basin/sub-basin. (Perhaps this is already included as a global challenge State wide.)

5. Additional discussion within the Flood Management section starting on page 4-10 may be warranted regarding the work conducted by the The Pajaró River Watershed Flood Prevention Authority established in July of 2000 by State Assembly Bill 807 in order to "identify, evaluate, fund, and implement flood prevention and control strategies in the Pajaro River Watershed, on an intergovernmental basis." The watershed covers areas within four counties and four water districts. The Authority

Board of Directors was originally comprised by law of one representative from each of the following eight jurisdictions:

- County of Santa Clara
- County of Monterey
- County of San Benito
- County of Santa Cruz
- Santa Clara Valley Water District
- San Benito County Water District
- Monterey County Water Resources Agency
- Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Zone 7

The Authority now appears defunct. The Pajaro River Flood Protection Project appears to have replaced this effort. Additional information can be found at the following site: http://www.pajarofloodprotection.org/

6. Although our old Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) chapter refers to Watershed Management Areas (WMAs), we no longer use this terminology internally. Although this terminology is not actually wrong, it is now a bit outdated. Subsequently, we recommend using the term hydrologic areas or major watersheds instead of WMA.

7. It would be useful to include estimates and a discussion of relative urban and agricultural water use within the region. The Monterey County (MCWRA) may have this information for the Salinas Valley, and it might be good to include as reference. We are assuming this information will be included under the forthcoming Water Uses section starting on page 4-8.

8. Comments on Table 4-5 regarding proposed desalination plants in Region 3:

- City of Santa Cruz - Pilot plant was decommissioned in April 2009
- Cal Am Water Co - The proposed max capacity may be 25 mgd rather than 11-12 mgd as noted in the table. The Central Coast Water Board has not issued a permit for the project and it is still in the environmental review stage as part of the Cal-Am Coastal Water Project (see http://www.cwp-eir.com/ for more information).
- Pajaro-Sunny Mesa/Poseidon - We permitted the pilot plant but it has not been started given the Coastal Commission has not granted their permit.
- City of Sand City - They have a permit from the Regional Board.
- Monterey Peninsula Water Management District – We are not clear on this project as it may be one of the project alternatives within the Cal-Am Coastal Water Project noted above.
- Ocean View Plaza - We and Coastal Commission have permitted this facility. It will have a subsurface intake with a temporary allowance to use a surface backup intake if the subsurface intake is clogged. Our permit has been

petitioned. We are waiting for a letter from CA F&G legal counsel to respond to the petition.

- Cambria CSD – It is our understanding that the Coastal Commission redirected them to look at other alternative areas to drill exploratory beach wells.
- Arroyo Grande/Grover Beach/Oceano CSD - We are not familiar with this project

Potential additions to the table for projects currently being discussed but not proposed (recommend coordinating directly with noted agencies before including in the table):

- City of Morro Bay temporary desal plant project - They currently have a permit that we are looking at either reissuing or putting them under the General Low Threat Permit
- City of Santa Barbara – They sold portions of their desal facility but there is talk of restarting the project.
- Nipomo CSD - They are reportedly considering the possibility of a desal project.

9. Note the following recommended changes in the second paragraph on page 4-2 under, Central Watershed Management Area:

   The Salinas River watershed, which drains more than 40 percent of the hydrologic region, is the largest individual watershed in the Central Coast area, encompassing an area of approximately 4,692 square miles. ~~It originates 4,000 feet above sea level in the Santa Ynez Mountains and encompasses an area of approximately 3,950 square miles.~~ The watershed includes the Salinas Valley, which extends from the Salinas River headwaters in the La Panza and Garcia Mountains in ~~southern~~ northern San Luis Obispo County to Monterey Bay, a length of approximately 170 miles. Major tributaries of the Salinas River are the Nacimiento and San Antonio rivers and Arroyo Seco, all of which originate west of the Salinas in the Santa Lucia Range, and the Estrella River and San Lorenzo Creek, which begin east of the Salinas River in the Cholame Hills and ~~Diablo Range~~ Gabilan Range, respectively.

10. General comment: Chapter 4 is focused on describing existing conditions, but does not include forecasting future needs and means to meet those needs. The latter information would be very helpful in the sustainable management of water resources within each region and individual watersheds.

11. The second sentence of the first paragraph on page 4-1 stating, “Two areas of interest—the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Mountain Counties Area are also included in this chapter” appears to have been inadvertently included from a different chapter given these areas are not part of our region and we could not find any additional references to them in this chapter.

12. The second paragraph under the Settings section on page 4-1 provides a good description of the southern portion of the region only. This section should also include a description of the northern half of the region, or not include any description of the region at all given the subsequent Watersheds section includes descriptions of the Region's four sections (northern, costal, central, and southern).

13. Within the Land Use Patterns section starting on page 4-5, the Central Watershed Area discussion should include (as is done for Santa Cruz County in the Northern Watershed description) the value of the Salinas Valley/Monterey County ag business ($3.8 billion plus according to MCWRA).

14. The Land use Patterns section, in general, seems to underplay the significance of the wine industry (vineyards) in the Central Cost area, and their impact on water resources (conversion from grazing to irrigated vineyards, and heavy groundwater dependency).

15. The Water Supplies Section understates the roles of Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs in recharging groundwater supplies in the Salinas Valley. Also, groundwater is the major source of water supply in the Salinas Valley, to both ag and urban uses. Again, we suggest you coordinate with the MCWRA on developing specific language on this topic.

16. Add the following regarding the Santa Maria Levee to Appendix 4A (note reference to Appendix 3A under Flood Management on page 4-10 is incorrect):

    Following the Hurricane Katrina Disaster in August 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers began a systematic assessment of flood control structures and facilities throughout the United States to measure their risk of potential failure. After its assessment of the Santa Maria River Levee, in March 2006, the Army Corps of Engineers placed the Santa Maria River Levee on the nationwide list of levees at risk of failure and declined to certify that it could withstand a 100-year flood. Subsequent to that, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) then began preparing revised flood maps. Preliminary results of FEMA's effort appears to place most of the City and a large portion of the Santa Maria Valley in the 100-year flood zone which likely will lead to mandatory flood insurance for thousands of property owners and a noncompliance of the Santa Maria Landfill in accordance with California Code of Regulations Title 27. In April 2008, the City of Santa Maria received $40.231 million for the Santa Maria River Levee repair project. This grant combined with the previously approved $6.7 million for repairs, results in repairs to the levee being fully funded over its two-to-three-year construction period.

17. Revise the Irrigation and Nutrient Management Section on page 4-10 as follows:

Irrigation Efficiency and Nutrient Management. The Central Coast region has ubiquitous nutrient and toxicity water quality problems. Farming practices contribute much of this pollution within the Central Coast region. When funding becomes available, Regional Water Board staff will administer a nonpoint source grant program to aid Central Coast farmers in implementing irrigation and nutrient management practices to reduce the discharge of pollutants from agricultural operations into surface waters. The Central Coast Water Board will also consider renewal of its Irrigated Ag Order in 2010, which will include requirements to address irrigation efficiency and nutrient management.

18. Please add the following section to the Water Quality Section within the Central Coast Vision discussion:

Agricultural Regulatory Program (Ag Program). The Regional Water Board is advancing our efforts to structure and align the Ag Program in the context of our Vision for Healthy Watersheds by focusing on our highest priority issues and actions. We are maximizing our effectiveness by identifying and prioritizing actions that address the most significant agricultural water quality problems we face in the Central Coast Region, including pollutants in agricultural tailwater, nitrates in groundwater from fertilizer, surface water toxicity resulting from pesticides, loss of riparian and aquatic habitat, surface water nutrients from fertilizer, and sediment discharge.

Addressing priority agricultural water quality issues, on a watershed basis using a focused and systematic approach, in coordination with other Regional Water Board programs and efforts, enables us to maximize our effectiveness toward tangible water quality improvement outcomes. In addition, we can assess and track our progress at the watershed scale, using specific, tangible operational measures, and adapt to the feedback our tracking provides.

19. Change the first bullet under *Ongoing Focused Efforts to Improve Water Quality* within the Water Quality section on page 4-1 as follows:

Agricultural Regulatory Program ~~Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands~~.

20. Revise the second paragraph of Appendix 4B Water Quality as follows:

~~Conditional Waiver~~ Irrigated Agricultural ~~of Waste Discharge~~ Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands. In ~~On July 9,~~ 2004, the Regional Water Board adopted ~~the Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements~~ requirements for ~~Discharges~~ discharges from ~~Irrigated Lands~~ irrigated lands. The purpose of the ~~Conditional Waiver~~ requirements are~~is~~ to regulate discharges from irrigated lands to

ensure that such discharges do not cause or contribute to exceedances of regional, State, or federal water quality standards.

Currently, more than 400,000 acres of irrigated farmland are ~~enrolled in this conditional waiver~~ regulated, representing about 93 percent of irrigated acreage in the Central Coast region. The ~~conditional waiver~~ Water Board requires ~~staff from~~ all irrigated farming operations to complete 15 hours of water quality education, ~~and~~ develop farm plans that focus on implementation of management measures that protect water quality from farm-related discharges, implement practices, and report implementation to the Water Board. ~~Most farming operations have implemented at least some management practices to address water quality concerns.~~ Water Board staff works to ensure that all growers comply with ~~the conditional waiver~~ the requirements through inspections, technical assistance referrals and enforcement actions. The enforcement effort is twofold: (1) to enroll the remaining growers who have not applied for coverage ~~participated in the conditional waiver~~, and (2) to ensure that those who are enrolled meet ~~the waiver's~~ all requirements, including monitoring obligations (either by conducting individual monitoring or by participating in the Cooperative Monitoring Program). Farmers and the Central Coast ~~Regional~~ Water Board established the Cooperative Monitoring Program to allow growers an ~~lower-cost~~ alternative to individual monitoring. The program is run by Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc., a nonprofit group; more information can be found at http://www.ccwqp.org/. Water Board staff is in the process of revising the Irrigated Agricultural Requirements. An updated Irrigated Agricultural Order for discharges from irrigated lands is anticipated in 2010.

Additional Specific Comment Regarding Content (not related to Volume 3, Chapter 4 – Central Coast Hydrologic Region):

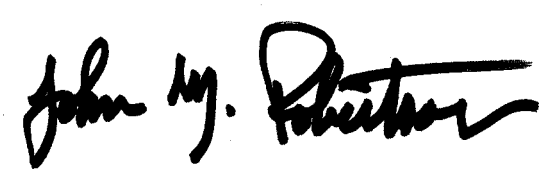
21. Volume 2, Chapter 15 Improve Water Quality-Groundwater Remediation/Aquifer Remediation. The last section of this chapter, *Recommendations to Promote and Facilitate Groundwater and Aquifer Remediation in California*, list strategies to protect aquifers and provide well head treatment, but does NOT list strategies to actually promote and facilitate remediation. This section should be renamed (*Recommendations to Protect Groundwater and Treat Groundwater at Point Of Use*), or include strategies to promote remediation, such as: provide funding for aquifer cleanup, and assure case closure is not granted until complete groundwater cleanup is achieved.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft 2009 Water Plan Update. We hope our comments will be helpful in making the Draft Update an effective tool to protect and restore our watersheds and provide sustainable water supplies to all Californians. We are currently redefining ourselves as a performance-based organization, working towards achieving tangible results in protecting and restoring healthy watershed functions in the Central Coast Region and we would like to work with

your agencies and other interested stakeholders in developing this objective as a common, unified goal within the Draft Update.

If you have questions regarding these comments, please contact **Matthew Keeling at (805) 549-3685, or mkeeling@waterboards.ca.gov**, or Michael Thomas at (805) 542-4623.

Sincerely,



for Roger W. Briggs
Executive Officer

e-file: S:\Seniors\Shared\Legislation Review\2009 Water Plan Update comment ltr.060409.doc
paper file:
task code: 126-01